

Tree Performance Art - Tim Womick at Carmel Elementary,

Spring 2007

Tim Womick honored the City of Carmel with a guest performance about the benefits of the Urban Forest. The City of Carmel partnered with the Carmel/Clay Parks and Recreation after-school program at Carmel Elementary School to share Mr. Womick's animated program with the students. Duke Energy sponsored Tim's visit, he works for a non-profit organization called Tree Family.

The City of Carmel donated a *Ginkgo biloba* tree that was planted at the elementary by Tim, the students, and Urban Forestry staff. Students also received a redbud seedling to plant at their home, donated by Carmel/Clay Parks and Recreation and Citizens for Greenspace, a non-profit organization that partners with the City for Arbor Day.

Tim Womick has performed before a million faces. He enjoys entertaining with jokes, props and song, and at the same time exposing others a bit more deeply with the natural world around them. This performance may be viewed on the Carmel Government Channel 16 in May.

Tim is often referred to as a modern-day Johnny Appleseed. Since 1990, Tim has criss-crossed the United States (and even visited a few foreign countries) with his highly animated Trail of Trees (really a Tale of Trees), educating people of all ages about the importance of these beings to their community's health and their own human potential.

His fast-paced and highly animated program is "performance art" that brings up to a dozen students on stage to become part of the act -- perhaps in song, tree imitations, and plenty of comic relief. It's all so natural and everyone knows immediately something authentic is about to occur. From first grade to high school, the show is altered to interest and intrigue.

Following brief words on topics from posture to potential, the air takes on the atmosphere of a television game show as participants raise their hands to answer questions, such as, "Who can tell me what kinds of cool things trees give us?" Once acknowledged, students shout, "Clean Air!," "Shade!," "Homes For Animals!," "Food!," "Hardwood Products!" With the style and mannerisms of a circus ringmaster, Appleseedz shares in a roller coaster of tones and voices.

Using props as diverse as an abacus, a rayon dress and a squirt bottle, audiences are exposed to scientific concepts about earth materials - trees, water and air. All are integral parts of the public education system - important information in elementary school days and beyond. A bird's nest could wind up atop someone's head while another sports dark sunglasses and sings like Elvis.

Appleseedz drops tidbits of biology to show how trees filter urban particulate pollution and bits of mathematics concerning the percentages of folks living in the urban forests

of our megacities. He helps students gain a sense of the importance of their canopy's shade on dropping the temperature around us. Throughout the hour-long program, participants learn about trees, the value of trees, and why we should plant more of them. Appleseedz encourages the audience to care for the trees where they live.

Those who suddenly find themselves beside Appleseedz and in front of the audience generally blossom (or continue to bloom) in their own right. Student participation is what it's all about. Appleseedz suggests that students leave the performance ready to keep a journal focusing on a certain tree, or speak to others about what they think of trees in order to open doors to an understanding about our fragile environmental footing and the vital role trees play in sustaining that footing.

You can view the Tree Family website for more information at: www.treefamily.org/index.html

Photos of this event:

